

# 留学生の心理的体験に関する一研究

ーイギリス留学中の日本人学生によって語られたイメージとメタファーを通して

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## 1. Introduction

According to the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2007), nearly 83,000 Japanese went to study abroad in higher education in 2004, 70 % of whom chose the United States and European countries as their destination. In 2008, they also reported that after the “Plan to Accept 100,000 Foreign Students,” the number of international students in Japan was increasing dramatically and numbered approximately 117,000 in higher education in 2004.

The recent globalization in education has seen the characteristics of Japanese international students change dramatically (e.g., Hayashi, 2000; Ward *et al.*, 2001). “Economic growth after World War II in Japan and the Japanese government’ s policy in the light of recent worldwide movements towards globalisation made studying abroad accessible for more young Japanese” (Ayano, 2006a: 12) In Japan, studying abroad used to be only for the elite few, but it is now also accessible for ordinary people who have the desire and the financial background such as language learners studying at a Japanese university, which has a branch in a foreign country

or a Year Abroad programme as a course requirement (Hayashi, 2000). The majority of the participants in the current research come under this new group.

Numerous studies on the adjustment processes of international students have been carried out from different research perspectives partly because of the increase in the number of international students and partly because of a growing interest in multicultural issues. However, few studies have focused in depth on the nature of students' psychological experience.

Traditionally, intercultural adjustment was discussed within the context of so-called culture shock and some well-known theories have influenced some studies to some extent. Examples include stage theory by Oberg (1960) and Adler (1975), the U-curve/W-curve hypothesis by Lysgaard (1955) and Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963) and the ABC of intercultural experience by Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2001), some of which remain influential in their fields and have inspired further research.

Although they provide useful information and carry important implications, the following three weaknesses were identified from my literature review:

1. Research studies in sociology and social psychology focuses on behavioural changes and psychological states rather than the psychological experiences of individuals.
2. Research studies from clinical psychology, counselling and psychiatry focuses on the negative aspects of the psychological experiences of

individuals viewing them only as problematic reactions to intercultural experiences rather than as opportunities for change.

3. Since the characteristics of international students have been dramatically changing due to the recent globalization in education, a factor is not sufficiently taken into account (e.g., Hayashi, 2000; Ward *et al.*, 2001).

In order to support international students effectively, it seems crucial to reveal what is actually happening in detail and in depth while they consciously feel happy or sad, for example. As a counsellor who was trained in the person centred approach, my view of human beings has been deeply influenced by Carl Rogers who views human organisms as being full of natural potential and inherently trustworthy in terms of ‘actualising tendency’, which motivates our behaviour and provides “one central source of energy” in life. It regulates even our most basic behaviours like the seeking food or sexual satisfaction and also directs development, fulfilment, enhancement, constructive and reproductive outcomes and wholeness (Rogers, 1977: 242-3).

Having said that, the primary aim of my research is to reveal what is happening in the minds of international students’ while they are tackling the challenges presented by living in a different environment to establish a new way of living rooted in their actualising tendency. The focus of the present study is thus twofold. Firstly, it focuses on the manifestations of the psychological adjustment of Japanese international students’ in the host country. Secondly, it focuses on the significance of the support

system that enables them to be effective as students and residents abroad.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Participants

The participants of my study were Japanese students who were studying in England for one academic year. They were divided into two groups. The first group of students belonged to a branch of a Japanese university attached to a British university who had their own campus and who were following a different curriculum from the British university. However, the students lived in several colleges of the British university with other students and had opportunities to join various kinds of activities, such as sports clubs, an orchestra, formal dinners and a ball with host students and other international students. The classes they took whilst studying in England included English language classes and European culture and politics. During the holidays, they were required to leave the college under regulations of the British university. During this time, they joined holiday programmes planned by their university such as ski tours, English language school programmes, European tours, home stays, and independent travel with friends, although in fact most of them travelled with a group of close Japanese friends. From this group, the number of participants for the questionnaire research was 43 and of those, 12 students volunteered for an interview. The second group consisted of exchange students at the same British university, who had attended the pre-sessional English course for one to two months prior to the main

academic course at the university. They attended several classes at the university with host or other international students and lived in the university colleges. The number of research participants from this group was 6, all of whom agreed to the interview.

## 2.2. Data collection and analysis

I conducted a one-year longitudinal research project with these students by questionnaires and interviews from 1999 to 2001.

### 2.2.1. Questionnaires

The questionnaires focused on students' background, experiences, feelings and emotions before and during their study abroad. I adapted some questions from other questionnaires. The questions concern the states of homesickness are from the Dundee Relocational Inventory (DRI) by Fisher (1989). For absent mindedness, I used the Cognitive Failures Questionnaire (CFQ) by Broadbent, Cooper, FitzGerald and Parkes (1982). For psychological well-being, I chose a standardised test which is the sub-questions of the General Well-Being Schedule (GWS) developed by Fazio (1977, cited in Robinson, Shaver and Wrightsman, 1991)

Three times of data collection were conducted. The first data collection was approximately one month after the students' arrival, the second one was during the second term and the final data collection was right before their departure. The number of the informants who completed three

questionnaires was 78 (female 49, male 29) all together. The data from questionnaire research were mainly analysed quantitatively using SPSS in order to establish the evidence of students' experiences, e.g., home sickness, psychological fatigue, psychological well-being and relationships with other people, during the year.

### 2.2.2. Interview

Semi-structured interviews applying imagery and metaphor approaches used in counseling were conducted. The interviews covered similar questions to those covered in the questionnaires, but in more depth. The imagery and metaphor approach was appropriate for my research since "metaphors can be used to describe experiences and emotions for which, at least at that time, there are no words; they are too abstract, intense, complex or ethereal" (Bayne & Thompson, 2000: 48), and "metaphors seem to be a useful marker for psychotherapeutic change, as the 'burdened' theme in the good-outcome was transformed into an 'unloading' theme, a change which was not evident in the poor outcome" (Levitt, Korman & Angus, 2000: 33).

In my past experience of interviewing Japanese students, some of them seemed to find it very difficult to hold an image in their mind and talk about it, so I used a method invented by Ishiyama (1988) to facilitate the generation of students' imagery and metaphor, which originally derived from counsellor training using metaphors. I modified some questions to make them more appropriate for my research but the basic meaning of

each question remained true to the original.

Regarding the data analysis of interview material, I used thematic analysis and grounded theory analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) when analysing interview transcripts. The former is a widely known qualitative analysis method developed by Boyatzis who defines it as follows (1998: vi):

...thematic analysis, is a process that many have used in the past without articulating the specific techniques. It is a process used as part of many qualitative methods. In this sense, it is not a separate method, such as grounded theory or ethnography, but something to be used to assist the researcher in the search for insight.

As for grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin (1990: 23) define it as follows:

A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.

Ayano (2006a, 2006b) argues that thematic analysis and grounded theory compensate for each other's weaknesses. That is to say, thematic analysis helps reduce a vast amount of data to a manageable size and grounded theory enables the researcher to analyse data in depth. Although those two methods have different characteristics, the analytical processes they use are similar since they both involve coding, categorising and linking data by making comparisons (ibid.).

### 3. Findings

In this section, I will present some data relevant to the research questions focusing firstly on the general psychological states of Japanese students and secondly on their concerns. Further, remembering that the research project mixes quantitative and qualitative research methods, and noting Fielding, *et al's* (1986) comment that it is necessary to link the findings from both sets of data to illustrate the whole picture relevant to my research questions, I will summarise the findings from questionnaires already reported in previous studies (Ayano, 2006a; 2006b) and focus more on interview findings in this study.

#### 3.1. The psychological states of Japanese students

When I met the students for questionnaire research and interviews, I noticed that many of them looked very tired. Their eyes were not so bright, although they were where they had chosen to be and were doing what they had wanted to do. In this section, I will describe their psychological states during their year of study in England focusing on the psychological conditions affected by the transition to a different country.

##### 3.1.1. Questionnaire

To measure their adjustment level, I adapted the following three psychological tests: the Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI, Fisher, 1989), the Cognitive Failure Questionnaire (CFQ, Broadbent *et al.*, 1982) and the



General Well-Being Schedule (GWB, Fazio, 1977). The DRI is intended to measure homesickness and the CFQ is to measure psychological fatigue/absent-mindedness. The GWB is a standardised test for investigating general psychological states such as happiness and satisfaction. According to Ayano (2006a, 2006b), most of the Japanese students in this study experienced psychological difficulties throughout the year abroad.

### 3.1.2. Interview

#### 3.1.2.1. Arrival point

Activities and experiences at the arrival point appearing in students' stories are listed below:

- Moving in and changing accommodation(s)
- Sightseeing
- Language training
- Making friends
- Collecting information about a new environment
- Shopping
- Academic work

From this list, we can see that students were busy working to settle into a new environment, e.g., moving in and changing accommodation, sight seeing, shopping and making friends, alongside academic work and language training since they were all students. Students' views of such experiences were expressed using the following metaphors:

*Josoo kikan*\* (approaching period)\*\*

\*Interview transcription

\*\* Japanese transcriptions were translated by the researcher.

*Kinryoku toreeningu* ( muscle training).

They also said that they expected the main part of the study abroad programme would be coming soon implying that they were preparing for it at that point. From the two metaphors above, we can see that they saw study abroad as something challenging like doing the high jump or some difficult sport that required big strong muscles.

Other students said that *Shokkaku ga katahoo torete dokoni ittara iika wakaranai ari ga, onaji basho o guruguru mawatte iru.* (An ant with only one tentacle is going round in circles not knowing where to go.) The use of this ant metaphor and imagery clearly shows that the student was working very hard to settle into a new place by trial and error, feeling lost and confused in an unfamiliar environment.

When we encounter a new environment, we recognise things that are different or strange to us through all of the five senses that we do not normally notice in a familiar environment. Then we make an effort to understand the meanings and values of the new aspects by comparing them with old, familiar things and start feeling secure and comfortable when we can interpret new things in their own context.

More than a few students said that they tried to rearrange the furniture in their college room or put up curtains that were similar to those in their own room back in Japan. Others put up posters of artists such as famous singers or movie stars on the wall of their room to feel as secure as they felt in their own room back in Japan.

Establishing daily routines was another major concern because establishing that enables us to move around more freely without having to think things through or checking whether or not we are doing things correctly and effectively.

When I asked students about the reason for studying abroad, most of them said that they wanted to master English, by which they meant they wanted to speak fluently and communicate easily with native speakers. Making good friends with host people was another priority. Having actually arrived in England and faced up to reality, they realised that it was not so easy to achieve the goals they set previously set for themselves and that they needed to set new ones that were more realistic and achievable.

Considering the points made above, the arrival point seemed to be a demanding period and the results of the three psychological tests noted earlier supported this view.

Students' self-images were also expressed using imagery and metaphor. They often saw themselves as younger or small animals such as fish, puppies, whales, birds or ants, and as flying, floating or airy objects such as basketballs, balloons, frisbees or birds. When I asked them why they used such kinds of imagery and metaphor, they said that on the one hand, younger and small creatures are vulnerable, useless and need care. But on the other hand, they were growing and were full of potential. Further, the flying, floating and airy object imagery and metaphor seemed to carry two covert meanings for them. It showed firstly that they felt unstable in an unfamiliar environment, and secondly, that they felt free from their

parents and from the small world of Japan.

### 3.1.2.2. Middle of the year

Activities and experiences mentioned by the students in this period are listed below:

- Holiday and Moving out of college
  - Trip to Europe
  - Home stay
  - Visit friends' home
  - Language school
  - Working holidays
- Academic work
- School activities
  - School festival
- Socialising
- Daily routines
- Unpleasant incidents
  - Being expelled from college
  - Becoming sick
  - Being a victim of racial discrimination

Although the students had had many different kinds of exciting experiences by the middle of the year, they did not seem too excited. Consider the following typical example:

*Shuyo sareteru mitaina kanji. Oware ba kaereru.*

It is like that being kept in a prison. I can go home when I finish my term in prison.

Students had many challenging experiences every day in England such as walking around the city, shopping with friends, trying to speak in English,

doing a home-stay with a stranger for a few weeks and overcoming problems. Whilst this had all helped them develop survival skills in a new place, they still felt far from independent living.

Having familiarized themselves with and explored their new environment, their interest seemed to shift towards making friends with host students and international students from other countries whilst maintaining relationships with friends.

*Sandy's (pseudonym) story*

*Honto-wa moo, doppurī tsukat-te, koo, kaerou-to omot-tetanda-kedo, nanka...*

*Nante-yun-daro. Aisoreeto-sare-terut-te yuuka...*

*(Guruupu-ni hairo-to doryoku-sita-noka?) Un, sita sita. Sita-kedo yappa- nanka, soremadet-te yuuka... Issen-o hika-rerut-te yuuka...*

[...] *Igisujin-no naka-deno tukiai-kata-o, watashi-ni taisi-te, onaji-yoo-ni si-tekure-nai.*

[...] *Tatoeba kurabu-toka-ni it-temo, hanashi-kake-tari site-kureru-kedo, minna, yappa, jibun-no motto kyomi-no-arū hitotati-to, atumat-tec-chau-kara, jibun-wa, don-don, don-don, oite-ika-re-chau. Karera- wa sooyuu-fuu-ni, isikiteki-ni yat-terun-ja-nai-to omou-ndakedo. Nanka, jibunteki-niwa imaichi sononaka-ni hait-te ike-nainat-te yuu...*

Honestly, I wanted to be immersed into British students' groups. But, the reality is...I feel isolated.

(Did you try to join a British students' group?)\*

Oh, yes, yes, I did. But, I felt they put a border between them and me. For example, if I went to a club meeting, they came to talk to me kindly but they soon left me and went to someone else with whom they can talk about something more interesting. So, I felt left behind by them. They may have not noticed but I felt I couldn't join them.

\*\*\*A question asked by the interviewee

As noted earlier, making friends with host students was one of the main

purposes of studying abroad. Before going England, they had dreamed of themselves being surrounded by host students and had tried very hard to realise that dream for several months by then but despite their enormous effort, most students reported that they were not satisfied with their relationships with host students and non-Japanese international students.

Let us consider another story in which the student established a close relationship with host students.

*Nancy's story*

[...] *Yappari sugoi tukare-tandesu-yo. Moo, sutoresu-mo tamat-te ki-te, uun, tanosii-kedo yappari nihonjin-tomo iru-koto-mo ooi-desu-kedo, eigo shabera-nakucha naranaikoto-mo ookute... Sutoresu-toka, shiranai-hito-to ikki-ni ippai at-tari-sita-nde, moo... Hito-to sonna-ni zut-to issho-ni irut-tekoto-ga, nihon-dewa nakat-ta-kara. Jikka-dat-tan-de. Ima-wa, nani-ka asa-kara ban-made, dareka-ni awa-nakucha ikenai-kara, soyu-node, sugoi sutoresu-ga tamat-tet-te. Moo, kekko, sakunen kaeru chokuzen-gurai-wa, kekko, bakuhatsu-sisoo-na hodo-ni tsukare-tete, de, nihon kaet-ta-kara, nihon-wa iinaa-to omot-te. Zut-to, kaet-tekuru-no sugoi iya dat-tanndesu-kedo.*

I felt so tired. The stress was cumulating and [...] it's fun, of course, I spent a lot of time with Japanese friends, but I had to speak in English a lot...that was stressful and I've had met a lot of strangers at once and...

I haven't previously spent so much time with someone without my family because I was living with my parents back in Japan. Now, I have to meet people from morning to night. That is stressful, too. Then, I was so exhausted that I was almost bursting with my emotion, before I went back home in Japan during the holidays. I felt so relaxed in Japan that I really didn't want to come back here.

Unlike most research participants, Nancy (pseudonym) had become very friendly with host students. She said that it was very exciting to meet

someone for the first time and speak English with them but she said it was also stressful and tiring. She went out for a drink almost every night with host students in her college, although she dislikes drinking alcohol. She was not able to say ‘no’ to them, since she also wanted to develop close relationships with host students. She ignored her psychological and physical conditions and when she was too tired to continue this lifestyle, she decided to return to Japan for a while. Although she had succeeded in making good friends with host students on the surface, her underlying psychological experience had not been so enjoyable.

### 3.1.2.3. End of the period

Activities and experiences in the end of the year were as follows:

- Holidays
  - Trip to Europe
  - Home stay/staying at a friends’ home
  - Celebrating Christmas and New Year
  - Travel within the UK
  - Going back to Japan
- Academic work
  - Exams
  - English
  - Discussion
- Daily routines
- Coping with stress and homesickness
- Preparing for going home

Approximately eight months after their arrival, I interviewed the participants for the last time for the purposes of data collection. Since the winter holidays had just finished, the holidays were a common theme. As

I mentioned before, students had to vacate their accommodation during the holidays and for this reason, the Japanese university offered students different kinds of activities. Although leaving the city was unusual and exciting, travelling around and staying at hotels and strangers' homes seemed exhausting. This is clear in the following example:

*Ted(pseudonym)*

*...yappa, ichi-ban taihen-datta-naa to omou-koto ga, fuyu, 3-shuu-kan...date, 1-shuu-kann ga sukii no ryokoo itte, 2-shuu-kan ga, jibunn wa jiyuu-ryokoo o erandan-desu-yo. De, jibun-ra de yotei tatete, jibun-ra ga hoteru tottari-shinakya ikenai kara, yappa, sore ga taihen-datta-kanaa.*

So, what I thought the hardest thing was, in winter, for three weeks, one week for a ski trip and two weeks for a free trip which was my choice. And we made a plan for ourselves, which means we had to book hotels for ourselves, it was difficult.

By then, they had become more used to living in the host environment and could even manage to arrange a trip for themselves but considering their English proficiency, even this kind of activity must still have been a challenge for them and being so unsettled for three weeks must have been be very tiring. Counter-intuitively, however, such experiences seemed to increase their confidence.

*Mary (pseudonym)*

*Soo-desu-ne. motto nanka, nihon-datta-ra, motto minnna gaman-sezu...tte yuu ka, moo, sono, tannin wa doo-demo iikara, jibun no miti o iku-tte-yuu kanji wa shita to omou-kiedo, kono D-city ni ite, onaji basho ni nihon-jin ga katamatte-iru to, nanka, otagai-ni, nanka, minna, onaji senjoo ni irukana toka, minna nani shiterundaroo tteiu, nanka, soosaku-shichau-yoo-na, sensaku? Umaku ienai-kedo, sono.*

*“Are? Heya ni inai-kedo, kyoo wa dooshichattanda-roo toka. Tatoeba, moshi,*



*Tomodati de, eigo o nobashi-tai. De, gaijin ni ippai aitai-tutte, maikai, maikai ai-ni itteru-to, aa, inai to omoi-tutu-mo, moshi sonotugi no toki ni, sono-ko ni atta-ra, mata kyoo mo ai-ni iku-no? toka, nanige-naku, jibun de shitumon shiteru-n-desu-ne. sore wa warui imi wa motteinai-n-dake-do, atode yoku kangae-reba, puraibashii no koto...puraibeeto na koto-da-shi, kikanaku-te-mo ii-noni, kiichatta-ri...*

Well, I suppose if we are in Japan, we could go on our own way without worrying about other people. But now, we Japanese are in D-city stuck together, well, each other, we check whether we stand at the same line or not, or sniffing or prying about what other people are doing.

For example, I might think, “Well, s/he wasn’t in her/his room. Where did s/he go, today?” For example, if my friend who wants to improve her/his English proficiency and go to see foreigners (British people), I envy her/him and I found myself asking her/him, “Are you going to see foreigners (British people) today, again?” It is her/his privacy...I can be too nosy without noticing it. I don’t have to ask it but I ask such questions.

In their daily life, establishing a relationship with host students and non-Japanese international students still seemed to present a challenge and during this period, only a few students succeeded. Whether or not they had host or/and non-Japanese friends and if they did, how often they met them seemed to become a major concern for them since they thought this would influence the development of their English proficiency.

#### *Jack’s (pseudonym) story*

*Dakara, nanka...anmari gohatto-desu-toka-yu-kanji-no (laugh).\*\**

*Nihongo-gakka-de manna-deru hito-to tomodachi-ni naru-to, nihonjin-ga 3,4-nin atsumaru-kara, butsukaru-wake-desu-ne. ...Tomodachi-tokat-*

*te 2-tai-1-ja-naku-te, 1-tai-1-janai-desu-ka, akiraka-ni...ano...hanasu-toki. Demo, aru-teido-no nihonjin- dousi-no kiyaku...kiyaku-kankei-ppoku, futari-de hitori-no tokoro-ni ikut-te yuno-ha, akiraka-ni, ano, sore-wa kizuke-nai-desu-ne, tomodati-kankei.*

*...toriai-toka.*

*... "nani hanasi-ten-da-yoo aitsu"...toka, nari-kane-nai-desu-ne. (Jack)*

...So, it' s something like a taboo...to make a friend with a (British) student in the Japanese language course.

Because...because if you make a friend with a (British) student in the Japanese language course, 3 or 4 Japanese students interact with one (British student). It is obvious that a conversation goes better if you are a pair (with a British student), not two (Japanese) to one (British). It' s not good to come between other people' s one to one relationships by tacit agreement within the Japanese students' group. It disturbs other' s friendship.

[...] Scrambling for a British friend [...] or searching how others are doing...something like, "Hey! What are they talking about together?"

\*\* Words in parenthesis were added by the researcher.

As Jack said above, it seemed crucial yet difficult for them to establish a close relationship with host or/and non-Japanese students on the one hand whilst maintaining friendships with other Japanese students on the other hand. Ayano (2006a, 2006b) suggested that having a host or/and a non-Japanese friend often sparked jealousy in other Japanese students, which often led to exclusion from the Japanese network. Furthermore, the students without any host or/and non-Japanese friends seemed to develop a negative self-image by contrasting to those who go out to see a host or/and a non-Japanese. Since this was the end of the period, they only had a limited time to build up a friendship with host or/and non-Japanese people, it seemed natural for the tension between participants to increase.

In this period, the students started missing the host environment on the one hand, and started thinking of going back home on the other hand.

*Matthew (pseudonym)*

*Kawatta koto to ieba...ima, igirisu ni irukoto ni nare-chatte, gaikoku-jin ga, moo, mawari ni iru-koto ga atarimae ni nacchatte, nihon ni kaetta toki-ni, nanka, sugoi, sabishii-ki ga surun-ja nai-kanatte....*

What changed in me is...now, I have got used to be in England, it is natural for me to have foreign (British or other) people around me. I think I may feel lonely when I go back to Japan (because there are few of them in Japan)\*.

\*a phrase is added by the researcher to convey the meaning of what the interviewee talked.

Talking about the changes in him through his experiences during the study abroad, Matthew started talking about how natural it felt to be surrounded by British or/and non-Japanese people in daily life. Then, his story shifted to his future life in Japan after his return. During this period, students were busy preparing to leave the host country and to start a new life in Japan whilst completing academic work. They had to tidy and pack things up to send back home whilst saying good bye to people they had met in the host country and doing whatever they could to minimise regret.

Anna's story exemplifies how the students felt in this period. They seemed to have mixed feelings about their experience and were becoming impatient. They were struggling with psychological conflict over their home and host countries.

*Anna (pseudonym)*

*...2-shuukan-gurai mae dattanda-kedo, nanka, sono-mae kara. Nanka,*

*fuyu-yasumi ga atte, sore-de, karendaa mite, kooyatte kazoeru-janai-desu-ka. Sono-toki ni,“ waa, ato...moshi, fuyu-yasumi ga owattara, ato, I-kagetu naijann toka...ato, I-kagetu shika nai-ya toka, minna de kutiguti ni ii-dashite .... De, dokka ikanakya toka, igirisu, zenzen, mawatte nai kara, ikanakya toka, sooyuu hito ga dete kita-ri toka shite, jibun mo asette.... Aa, nanka,“ A, kaerunda!”to omou to chotto.... Ureshii hanbun, samishii hanbun desu ne. Nanka, saisho wa, D-city nante, nani-mo nai-shi...to omotte, hayaku kaeri-tai, hayaku kaeri-tai...iya na koto mo ippai atta-kara, hayaku kaeri-tai to omotte-tanda-kedo, yappari, iza kaeru to naru to, aichaku-tte-yuu-ka, nanka ...un, sabishii desu ne. nanka, chotto, D-city o hanareru-no-ga....*

About 2 weeks ago or so, we had the winter holidays. Before that, I looked at a calendar and counted how many days we have. When I did it, I thought “Oh, we have only less than one month here after the winter holidays.” Others also recognised it and started talking about that. One said eagerly, “Oh, I have to visit a place or two, because I have not visited anywhere really!” Then, I started feeling uneasy. Well..., I realised that I was going home. I have a mixed feeling, half happy and half sad. Well, when I came here, I thought there was nothing interesting in D-city and so, I wanted to go home soon...well, because I had a lot of troubles with my friends too. But now, I am actually going home soon and I found I am attached here. So, I miss here. I don’t want to leave here.

Self evaluation of the year abroad was one of the most common and important topics dealt with at this stage and Tom used the metaphor of a star to describe it.

*Tom (pseudonym)*

*Hoshi desu ne. Te ni haira-nai hoshi ga...sora ni kagayai-teru hoshi wa, te o nobashi-te-mo, te ni haira-nai-ja-nai-desu-ka. Sore ga, ikki ni tikaduita-kanatte. Kyori-kan-tte yuun-desu-ka, “Te ni haira-nai-jan” tte omotte-te-mo, nanka, “A, sugee, nanka, tikazuita-kanaa” tte yuu-no-ga arimasu ne. Tada hoshi ga tikazuite-kita-dake kamo-shirenain-desu-kedo, jibun ga seichoo-shita-tte yuu-no-mo sukoshi aru-kamo-shirenai-desu-ne...*

(...hoshi-tte nan-desu-ka.)\*

*hoshii-mono-tten-desu-ka. Kodomo no koro hoshikatta mono. Ano, sora toka sugoi sukidattan-desu-yo. Uchuu toka. Sorede, ichiban saisho ni hakkenn-shita-hito ga namae tukerareru-janai-desu-ka. Mada, hakken-sarete-nai-yatu o. Sorede, sono hoshi ga hoshikattan-desu-yo. ...jibunn de, mitukeru-monotte-yuuno-ka, kyuushuu-suru-mono ga fueta-kanaa-tte omotte...*

A star which I can' t get...we can' t get a shining star in the sky. I feel like it became closer to me. It became closer to me, like, "I never be able to get it," turns "Wow! It' s coming closer!" It is only the star came to me but I may have developed and moved to the star.

(What do you mean by a star? What is a star to you?" )

I can say, it is what I want. It is what I wanted when I was a child. I liked the sky and was interested in the space. If someone discovers a star, then, that person can put a name on it, right? I wanted to have that. The star is something I will discover. I came to this country and I met a lot of people. The new world was open to me. I found more new things and absorbed them.

As we can see, Tom's story involves self-evaluation of the year abroad and personal development was a typical aspect of students' positive self-evaluations. Next, let me provide an example of students' negative self-evaluation that expresses negative feelings about study abroad.

*Andrew (pseudonym)*

*Nagai shugaku ryoko. "Shugaku ryoko, ikanakya yokatta.*

It has been like a long school trip. I might want to say, "I shouldn't have gone on a school trip" now.

In fact, many students said that they felt depressed or/and they feel

physically tired in the interviews in this period. Whilst a school trip itself can be an exciting and wonderful opportunity for the students, it can be exhausting and overwhelming if it is too long. For some students, the experience of studying abroad for a year seemed to be overwhelming and they seemed to need some more time to extract meaning from their experience and recover from fatigue.

#### 4. Discussion: Implications for effective support systems

In this final section, I will summarise the findings and discuss effective support systems.

From the data above, it can be seen that study abroad was a challenging experience for the Japanese international students who took part in the present study. For many international students, adjusting to an unfamiliar environment is not as easy as suggested in the traditional theories (e.g., Oberg, 1960; Lysgaard *et al.*, 1955) and many students reported that they experienced psychological difficulties over the year as well as enjoyable experiences of various kinds. This was also reported by other research (Abe, *et al.*, 1998; Ayano, 2006; Sonoda, 2008).

Despite the difficulties, however, I would like to argue that intercultural experience should not only be seen in terms of disaster. Students still seemed to cherish the hope and desire to grow up or move to another part of the world which implies they had a more developed self. For example, Ted said that he had grown very much since he came to England, in terms of changing in his way of thinking.

*Ted*

*...yappa, mono no kangae-kata no kawari-kata dayo ne. Moo, jibun ga ugoka-nakya, doo-nimo naranari-tte yuuno to.... Ato, aredayo-nee. Jibun ga, yo-no-naka miru-me ga dekaku natta yonee. Soo-yatte, kangaeru yooni natteru-tte- koto wa, iro iro, un. Bucchake, dakara, kita-toki-yori wa, zettai, deka-ku natteru-ki ga suru-ne.*

[...] So, a way of thinking has changed in me. And now, I know that I have to move otherwise nothing happens. And also, my view towards the world has become wider. I started thinking so. So, I can say, I definitely have grown very much than I was when I came here.

In daily life abroad, students may have developed more self-awareness than when they were in their home environment perhaps because they had more opportunities to compare themselves and their lives in many ways with people in and aspects of the host country. Ash's story below is one of the examples:

*Ash (pseudonym)*

*...Igirisu-jin no hoo-ga, motto jibun no kimoti-tte-yuu-no o, sugu, jibun de hyoomen ni dasu-ja-nai-desu-ka. Nihontte-yuu-no wa, Nihon-da-to, dasu hito ga iru kedo, yappa, aru-teido osae-tari nanka shitari suru-kedo, kotti wa moo, sonna-no naku-te, ma, nante yuun-da-roo. Honto-ni mukatuita-toki wa, honto-ni sugoi okoru-shi, yorokobu toki, honto-ni yorokonde-ru-shi, motto jibun ni sunao-da-naatte-yuu-fuu-ni. (Jibun mo soo-yuu-fuu-ni) yatte-mitai to omou. Sukoshi wa natterun-ja-nai-desu-ka?*

British people express their emotions, don't they? In Japan, we Japanese, well...some don't, but most of us usually suppress our emotions. When they really get, they express their anger. When they are happy, they shows their happy feelings. They are honest themselves. I want to do it like them. I think I can do it a little, now.

Another explanation may be that, as some students said, they had more time to think about themselves because they had less of a social life and were generally less occupied with familiar things than in their own country.

Therefore, I would like to argue that a support system should be developed to support the personal development of the international students to make their experiences more meaningful to them.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I discussed the psychological adjustment process of Japanese international students mainly through their stories focusing on imagery and metaphors.

Contrary to the traditional theory of culture shock, the psychological conditions of Japanese international students were rather negative throughout of the year but by exploring students' stories, a variety of factors clearly influenced their psychological conditions.

According to Carl Rogers, the process through which individuals explore themselves and become aware of the self "is a painful, vacillating one (1961: 531)." However, after going through such a process, they become "free from internal strain and anxiety" and "represent the maximum in realistically oriented adaptation (ibid.: 532)." Having examined Japanese students' experiences of studying abroad, it is found that encountering a



different culture seems to share some similarities with this psychological process, which implies in turn that a person-centred approach can be useful in helping international students explore their inner experiences.

Further research should include analysis and support for students on their return to their country, since the phenomenon of ‘reverse culture shock’ has been noticed but not sufficiently researched.

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